



Another Way to Separate Address Elements

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The method of separating address elements in the February 3 issue is a good illustration of Excel's text functions, and anyone who is serious about learning Excel should study that approach. For this particular problem, however, there is an easier way. Excel has a Text to Columns wizard, found under the Data menu, that can handle the job without any need for formulas. Using the wizard for address separation requires two passes.

The first pass separates the city from the state and ZIP code. In step 1 of the wizard, select **Delimited**. In step 2, select **Comma** as the separator. In step 3, select a blank column as the destination; if you don't do that, the first result column overwrites the input column.

On the second pass, to separate the state from the ZIP code, select **Delimited** in step 1. In step 2, check **Space** as the separator, and check the box **Treat consecutive delimiters as one** to avoid problems with extra spaces. In step 3, mark the first (blank) column as **Do not import** and the third column (ZIP code) as **text**, so it will be left-justified.

You can use the time you saved by not writing formulas to do an **AutoFilter** on the state field. You can easily see and correct errors caused by missing commas or spaces in the input. If, for example, there were many instances of run-together states and ZIP codes, you could copy those records to a new range and use the **fixed-width** option in step 1 of the Text to Columns wizard to separate them.

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Quite a few readers wrote with similar suggestions. Yes, if you're willing to modify the data, the Text to Columns wizard can be very useful. Note that an address with no space after the comma will not import correctly; it will have a ZIP code in the state column. Note too that it's very important to mark the ZIP code column as **text**. If you don't, leading zeros will be dropped.

After reviewing the entries and fixing any problems, you may want to replace the original run-together city/state/ZIP entry with a string concatenated from the separated parts. For example, if the city, state, and ZIP are in columns B, C, and D, enter this formula in cell A2: `=B2 & ", " & C2 & " " & D2`. Then copy this formula to the bottom of the column. Now your combined city/state/ZIP will always be in sync with the handily separated address elements.

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